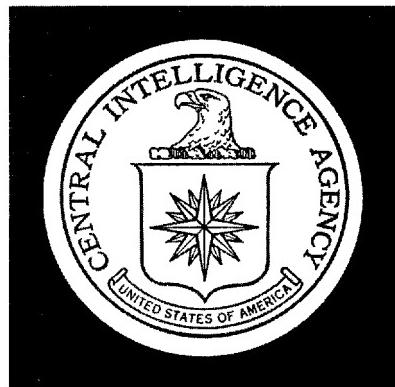


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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: The heaviest fighting of the JUNCTION CITY campaign took place over the weekend, with more than 250 Communists reportedly killed.

A two-hour engagement with a battalion-size Communist force in northern Tay Ninh Province highlighted a series of encounters that followed two enemy mortar attacks against US positions early on 11 March.

Two South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) battalions clashed with two Communist battalions near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in Quang Tri Province on 11 March, resulting in verified enemy losses of 180 dead. Other reports suggest that as many as 300 of the enemy may have died. The ARVN lost 17 killed and 62 wounded. Friendly forces were supported by US tactical air strikes, which may account for the high enemy losses.

Elements of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 324B Division are increasingly active in and south of the DMZ. [redacted]

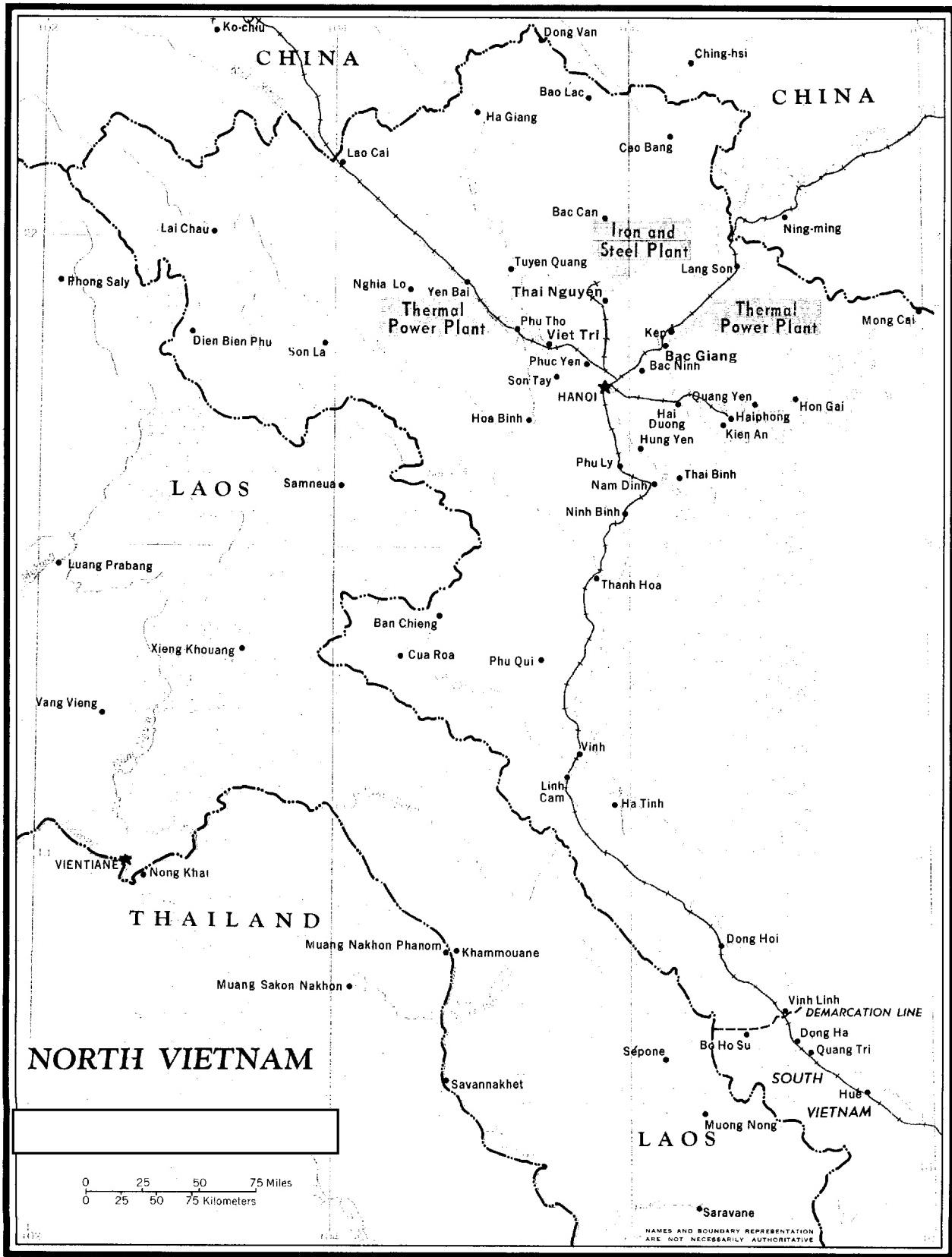
[redacted] captured enemy documents indicate that all three battalions of the division's 2,500-man 812th Regiment have moved back into the northern part of Quang Tri. Two of these battalions, together with other elements of the 324B Division, retreated north of the DMZ following heavy losses in Quang Tri last fall. (Map)

North Vietnamese Military Developments: US aircraft struck several industrial and strategic targets over the weekend.

The Thai Nguyen steel plant was hit on 11 March for the second time, and preliminary reports indicate large fires throughout the target area. Two power plants--at Viet Tri and Bac Giang--also were struck.

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Four US aircraft were downed by heavy ground fire on 11 March; there were no losses on 12 March. No encounters were reported with enemy aircraft, although several North Vietnamese fighters were sighted.

Hanoi has denounced the latest US air strikes, which it charges have inflicted civilian casualties, as a further escalation. (Map)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: The Constituent Assembly has completed most of the draft constitution, although some problems remain.

The assembly was scheduled to discuss a preamble this weekend, having approved on Friday a final chapter on the transition to a new government. This final chapter authorizes the present government to assume executive powers and the elected Constituent Assembly to exercise legislative powers during the transition.

It also provides for the election of a president and vice president within six months after the constitution is promulgated, and that a legislature be elected within a year after the president takes office. The assembly voted itself a prominent role in regulating the elections, but partly offset this enhancement of its power by waiving a draft proviso for election of province chiefs in order to allow the president to continue to appoint them during his first four-year term.

Chief of State Thieu has indicated that the ruling Directorate is not fully satisfied with some provisions of the draft constitution. He has also predicted, however, that these differences will be ironed out with the assembly this week and that the Directorate will not be forced to exercise its veto. The target date for presentation of the constitution to the Directorate is 27 March, with promulgation now set for late April.

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Indonesia: The Indonesian Congress yesterday declared Sukarno "no longer capable" of fulfilling his presidential duties and named General Suharto acting president.

This compromise congressional decree, [which closely follows earlier suggestions of General Suharto,] makes it unlikely that Sukarno will be brought to trial as students and other activists have demanded.

The decree requires a judicial "settlement" of Sukarno's past activities but leaves its implementation to acting President Suharto. Suharto has recently and publicly opposed bringing Sukarno to trial.

The nation had been well prepared for Congress' removal of Sukarno. Since the decree avoids the specific dismissal of Sukarno and bypasses the issue of his trial no significant reaction from Sukarno's supporters is likely.

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*France: The government party's close call in yesterday's legislative elections is unlikely to alter De Gaulle's major policies.

The Gaullist bloc can probably count on the support--if not the outright adhesion--of a sufficient number of conservative independent deputies to assure the government greater stability than its bare majority suggests. In any event, government policy can be challenged only by a censure motion supported by an assembly majority. The chances of getting the diverse opposition elements to agree on a censure measure would be slim even if the government lost its majority.

The Communist Party is the big winner, not only because it increased its representation by 75 percent but also because of its new aura of respectability as part of a broad opposition coalition. The Communists' attitude toward Pierre Mendes- France--a long-time idol of the left but also an outspoken opponent of Communism--may be a clue to the policy they will adopt in the new assembly. The party made possible his election by withdrawing the Communist candidate in the run-off. If it supports Mendes- France rather than Francois Mitterand, who is largely responsible for welding the left, the Gaullists will be faced with a more formidable opposition than otherwise.

De Gaulle has been aiming for a division of the assembly into two major blocs. The failure of the Democratic Center to win the minimum 30 seats required for committee assignments should further that objective.

(continued)

* Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State or of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.

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Couve de Murville's defeat need not deprive him of his cabinet post. It may reduce the possibility, however, of De Gaulle's ever considering him for the premiership.

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NOTES

Britain-USSR: [Negotiations on the Anglo-Soviet treaty of friendship will soon begin in Moscow, according to the British ambassador there. He thought that the treaty would probably have a preamble based on the UN charter and that its operative portion would be limited to cultural, scientific, and economic co-operation.]

Colombia: Opposition parties in Congress are threatening to prevent President Lleras Restrepo from attending next month's summit meeting in Uruguay. A group of senators say that they will not agree to Lleras' leaving the country unless he first arranges to have a vice president elected. Administration supporters lack four or five votes for the two-thirds majority required for Senate approval of the president's departure. The US Embassy in Bogota reports that the outcome is unclear.

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